

VIRTUAL REALITY

Zoe lowered herself gingerly onto the large, soft cushion that she had just added to her console chair. Her brand new tartan mini-kilt might be trendy, she mused, but it was not exactly the most practical wear for being put across an angry highlander's knee. Hence the cushion.

It wasn't as though she had done anything so very terrible, either. Jamie never wore his spare kilt, after all, and it would have taken such a long time for the TARDIS clothes dispenser to weave a plaid. She'd tried to tell him she'd replace the kilt in due time, but would he listen? No, he'd just snapped that she couldn't wear the kilt even if it had been hers to alter. He'd called her a 'naughty wee lassie'. And then had come the painful five minutes which had made sitting down so difficult now.

She'd told Jamie that she'd get even with him if it was the last thing she did, but she knew that really she never would. But she had paid for her kilt with a large sum of her pride, not to mention discomfort, and she was damn well going to wear it every day just to spite him. And moreover, there was somewhere she *could* get her revenge, somewhere she was in charge and she programmed every move. If she couldn't get back at Jamie in real life (and oh how she wished she could!), at least there was the virtual reality she was now tapping into the TARDIS computer.

Most of the details she'd scanned in from real life. Jamie, herself, the Doctor, the TARDIS, were all reproduced on the other side of her screen. All she had to do was make a few little changes, like putting her other self back into her usual catsuit, and then devise that vital added ingredient.

It took shape as she keyed in its details. She made it big, but not so big that it couldn't get through the passages and doorways of the ship. She gave it the stamina to outrun Jamie, but not too soon. She made it scaly and fearsome and hungry. Last of all the specifications was its diet. Zoe smirked to herself as she typed the words 'tartan plaid'.

Jamie strode along the corridor with mixed feelings. The spanking had been more than justified, of course. The wee girl had no right to take his kilt for herself, and certainly no right to wear the distinctive plaid of the

McCrimmons.

'But they're all the rage on Earth in the year 2000,' she had protested.

'You may come from the year 2000, Zoe,' he had replied, 'but what you need is a good deal more old-fashioned.' And then he'd turned her over his knee and spanked her soundly. But he couldn't quite shake off a feeling of self-reproach.

It wasn't that he'd hurt Zoe, for that was the point of it all. And surely it was no great matter for James Robert McCrimmon, who had fought English Redcoats and silver Cybermen, to hold a squirming lassie across his lap for a good larruping? No, what troubled Jamie was that, well-earned though the spanking was, he had enjoyed it just a little too much. But then, who wouldn't have enjoyed it? He could not suppress a satisfied grin as he remembered the sight of his fellow-traveler upended, helplessly kicking her legs at the empty air, the smile of her panties under the tartan pelmet growing wider and wider as she wagged her shapely bottom, desperately trying to evade the cascade of stinging slaps that avenged the honor of the clan. And though she struggled hard, Jamie had expertly controlled her bucking body with a firm grip around her waist while his powerful right hand did its work, leaving her only the minx's retaliation of ear-splitting howls and indignant 'how dare yous'.

A more guttural sound broke through Jamie's reverie, like a low moan slowly rising until it had become an angry roar. His hand instinctively went to the dirk in his stocking, but the tiny weapon clattered to the floor as he saw the size of the beastie that had invaded the TARDIS. Assessing his options took only a second: he had to warn Zoe and the Doctor, and there was no fighting the beastie by himself. Jamie turned and ran.

Zoe was enjoying herself as she steered the kilt-eater through the corridors after the virtual Jamie. The TARDIS computers had done her proud: the little highlander on the screen looked so lifelike in his panic. Wincing a little as she shifted in her seat, she made a mental note to compliment the Doctor on the quality of the graphics.

The sound of running footsteps outside made her look up from the screen.

'Zoe! Doctor!' It was Jamie's voice. So, she smiled to herself, he was on the run in real life too. She lifted herself gently from her cushion and went out to see the fun.

She saw - her own monster. It was just as scaly and just as fearsome as its counterpart on her screen, and she was very much afraid it might be just as hungry.

For the second time that day, Zoe was swept off her feet. Jamie barely broke his run as he swung the protesting lassie over his shoulder and carried her to safety. The beastie seemed confused by the sudden disappearance of its quarry behind a bulkhead. It came to a halt by the computer room door, swiveling its bloodshot eye in search of the tasty feast it had seen around Jamie's midriff.

'What did you do that for, Jamie?' said Zoe, angrily yanking down her short skirt.

'Och, it's small thanks I get for saving you from being gobbled up by yon terrible creature,' said the exasperated Scot.

'Yes, well, thank you very much,' replied Zoe, a trifle too snappily for Jamie's taste, 'but now it's between us and the TARDIS computer banks.'

'So?'

'So,' said Zoe, speaking very slowly as if to a backward child, 'now I can't get back in there to -' She hesitated. '- to activate the defense mechanisms.'

'No, Zoe, we must find the Doctor. He might be in danger too.'

'Oh, Jamie, there's hardly likely to be more than one of those things wandering about the TARDIS, now is there?'

Jamie looked unconvinced, but Zoe pressed on. 'No, I can deal with this myself if I can only get back into the computer room.'

Jamie risked a look round the side of their hiding place. 'It's not going to move. What we need is a diversion. I'll have to try to lead it off somewhere.'

'No, Jamie, I've got a better idea. Do you know about the bullfights in old Spain? They used a red cloak to attract the bull's attention.'

'But we don't have a red cloak,' said Jamie firmly.

Zoe looked pointedly down from his kilt to hers. His eyes widened in alarm as she fumbled with her buckle. 'No, Zoe, you mustn't!'

'Unlike you, Jamie, as you must already have noticed, I am not a Scotsman,' retorted Zoe sharply. The pleated material fanned out into the air as she drew the mini-kilt from around her waist and passed it to the gawping Jamie.

'Now pay attention,' she said, tugging down her tank top in a vain effort to cover up her panties. 'When I give the word, you throw my kilt as far as you can past the creature. Then I'll sprint back to the computer room and shut down the program - I mean, deal with the creature. And whatever you do, don't come out until I tell you it's safe. We don't want it going for your kilt too!'

Jamie shuddered at the dishonor of it: first she had stolen his clan tartan to make a lassie's frippery for herself, and now she wanted to use it as beastie bait. But pinned down here with no weapons there was little choice that he could see.

With the force of a highland shot-putter, he slung the kilt long down the corridor, and watched it unfurl as it went, a bright red streak against the TARDIS' clinical white walls. The monster turned, as if scenting its prey, and Zoe sprung from cover. Jamie could not resist peering round the bulkhead at her departing bottom, the tight fabric of her panties crimping in the center as the two beautifully curved cheeks flexed alternately in her run for the door. He was almost sorry when she made it and disappeared from view.

Adrenalin was in control now. Zoe felt nothing as she sat heavily down at her console, sending her cushion skidding from the chair. Her hands played over the controls, undoing one by one her instructions that had defined the kilt-eater and made it such a deadly reality.

Outside she could hear the munching, belching sound of her hard-bought kilt disappearing down the monster's gullet. Then a cry of mixed relief and anxiety from Jamie. 'Zoe! It's moving off! We must warn the Doctor!'

Zoe pressed the final key and crossed to the door. She glanced at the screen, checking to see that the computer had started to execute the shutdown program, and returned to Jamie. 'It's alright,' she reassured him, 'I've done it. The creature is getting weaker all the time, and it'll disappear altogether in a minute or two.'

'Let's hope it's soon enough to save the Doctor,' said Jamie grimly.

As if in response, a familiar cry of panic echoed down the corridor. Jamie and Zoe looked at one another with horror, then gaped with a mixture of relief and amusement as the Doctor waddled into view, a towel wrapped loosely around his nether regions.

'Oh my giddy aunt, what a narrow escape!'

'Did ye meet up with yon fearsome beastie too, Doctor?' asked Jamie.

'Yes, and look what it did to me before it vanished! No, don't look. My best pair of check trousers!'

'I don't understand,' said Zoe, 'it was only supposed to eat ...' She stopped herself short as she felt the two men's eyes swing in her direction, but there was no going back. 'It was only supposed to eat tartan plaid,' she finished sheepishly, and fixed her eyes intently on the toes of her boots.

'You created that terrible monster?' asked the Doctor.

'To eat my kilt!' added a furious Jamie.

'It was only supposed to be a virtual reality game, not real.'

'How often have I told you, Zoe, never to play with virtual reality in the TARDIS? The telepathic circuits must have picked up your program and configured it here, in real life.'

Zoe bit her lip as she remembered wishing her revenge could be real. 'At

least none of us was really harmed before I managed to close it down. Well, apart from your trousers and my kilt, that is.' She looked from the frowning Doctor to Jamie, still glowering over the insult to his highland heritage. She forced a smile. 'Yes, well, I really must put a catsuit on before I catch cold.'

'Before you do that, Zoe, there's one last thing to be done. And I don't think there's any danger of you catching cold the while.' She gulped as the Doctor turned to his other companion and said, 'Jamie, you have a strong right arm. Perhaps I could leave you to give this naughty girl a well-deserved spanking.'

'Aye, Doctor,' said Jamie as the older man left the room. He rolled up his sleeve as he strode meaningfully towards her. A flick of the wrist turned Zoe helplessly over his lap as he sat down. He looked down at the pneumatic swell of her unprotected bottom, her bright white panties snug as a second skin. 'I canna have done the job properly before,' he told her. Zoe drew in breath. This was going to be worse than the last time.

Setting the controls of the TARDIS, the Doctor smiled as the air was punctured by the distinctive explosive sound of a hard hand impacting on firm, soft flesh, followed by a half-stifled squeal. For once, justice was being done within the TARDIS as it always was outside. How often he had itched to give Zoe exactly what she was getting today! And he'd have done it if it wasn't beneath his dignity. Maybe now there'd be no more of that 'nearly as clever as I am' nonsense. Another slap, another wail. The time machine drifted on through the turnpike of infinity.